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TO: Department of State DEPT PASS: MANAGUA, MEXICO, SAN JOSE, SAN SALVADOR, TEGUCIGALPA, USCINCSO-AF EO 11652: GDS GT, PINS, SHUM, PORS FROM: Amembassy GUATEMALA DATE: June 27, 1977 SUBJECT: Monthly Report on Political Violence and Human Rights: May 1977 REF: SUMMARY: There were 27 press-reported incidents of probable political violence in May, including 17 murders. This is the seventh consecutive month in which the total number of incidents remained below 30. The EGP dominated the headlines by kidnapping Salvadorean Ambassador Casanova and then trading Casanova's safe release for the reading of an EGP communique at the annual meeting of the Inter-American Development Bank. The EGP also struck three times at wealthy industrialists in their continuing efforts to exploit labor problems. PGT or ex-PGT elements set off four bombs during the May Day celebrations. No one was injured in the explosions. END SUMMARY EGP Spectacular The May 29 kidnapping of Salvadorean Ambassador Casanova (see Guatemala 3374, 3377, 3406, 3407 and 3437) by the EGP was one of the terrorist organization's most successful operations since it became active under its present name in mid-1975. In kidnapping Casanova off one of Guatemala City's mos. heavily travelled streets while the annual meeting of the Inter-American Development Bank was in session, the EGP greatly embarrassed the Laugerud Administration and received worldwide publicity for its grievances against the Guatemalan and Salvadorean governments. Labor Disputes Exploited Earlier in the month, on May 3, the EGP struck for the third, fourth and fifth times against industrialists involved in labor disputes at their factories. (See Guatemala A-08 and A-44 for previous incidents.) In the first two cases in May, the EGP bombed the unoccupied automobiles of two industrialists but made no attempt to injure or								
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POL: RFSnyder:mej						DCM: Grandrews		
POL: GFJones (in draft)						POL: I: KGoodman (in draft)		

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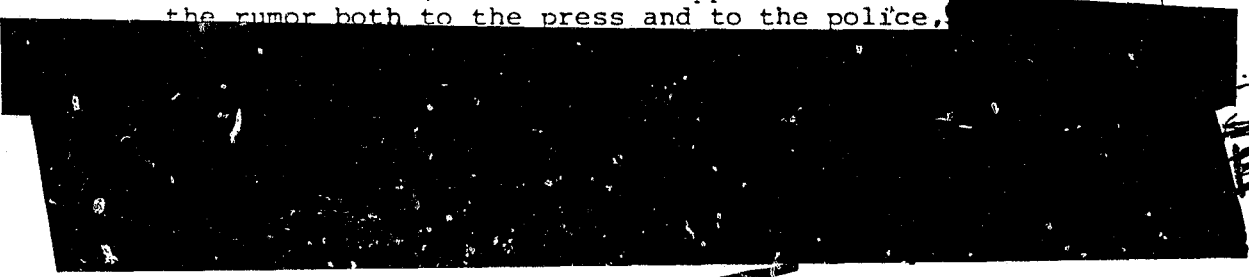
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kill them. One of the industrialists was Oscar Zimeri Nasar, a cousin of Elias Zimeri Safie, who was allegedly involved in an anti-government plot in May 1976 (see 76 Guatemala A-63). The EGP acknowledged responsibility in a written communique and claimed the attacks were retribution for massive layoffs of workers.

Then, on May 13, a bomb was set off in a warehouse belonging to another member of the Zimeri family, Jorge Zimeri Safie, causing damage estimated at \$100,000. The EGP was apparently responsible here, too, because several newspapers received telephone calls from alleged EGP members claiming responsibility for the bomb and justifying the attack as vengeance against Zimeri for poor treatment of his workers.

With these five attacks against urban industrialists, plus a series of earlier attacks against finca owners for alleged exploitation of their campesinos, the EGP has established a pattern of exploiting labor disputes for propaganda and political purposes. There is no evidence, however, that there has been any collaboration between the EGP and any of the trade union organizations involved. In fact, one union attorney told the reporting officer that in one dispute in March the union and the company were ready to sign an agreement settling the problem when the EGP burned the owner's car. The industrialist in this case then persuaded the President to send in the riot police to end the strike.

Zimeri - The "Chosen" Family The Zimeri family seems to have been a special target of the EGP during May. In addition to the above attacks against Zimeri property, the press was filled with reports in mid-May that a member of the Zimeri family, probably a son of the Oscar Zimeri mentioned above, had been kidnapped. The family denied the rumor both to the press and to the police.



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There is nothing definite to link this kidnapping to the EGP. However, the EGP was responsible for earlier attacks this month against the Zimeri family and they have carried out a number of similar kidnappings of wealthy Guatemalans.

EGP - South Coast Division While all of the above incidents were presumably perpetrated by the Guatemala City branch of the EGP, the south coast division (there are four distinct EGP units operating in Guatemala) was responsible for the murder of a campesino in Suchitepequez. An EGP communique said the campesino was killed "for being one of the criminals in the Ixcán (El Quiché Department) who caused suffering to the campesinos. He was a guide to the Army and denounced campesinos for being collaborators of the guerrillas for which many disappeared and were tortured and murdered." In the same communique the EGP accused National Police Chief Colonel Gonzalez Palacios of having participated in the infamous murder of 29 leftists in 1966 during the Peralta Azurdia Administration, when the 29 victims were killed and then dropped into the Pacific from an Air Force plane.

May Day Bomb The EGP was not the only leftist organization active during May. Four bombs were set off on May 1 and 2, in conjunction with May Day celebrations, by a group calling itself the "Marxist-Leninist Command." A statement sent to the press said the bombs were a protest "against the majority of judges and labor inspectors who accepted bribes from the private sector, and against the murder of our brothers in Chiquimula" (see Guatemala A-62) "and the brutal eviction of our brothers from the squatter settlement, San Juan de Dios." (The Mobile Military Police evicted a number of squatters several weeks ago and destroyed their homes in an action that was later described as "a mistake".) This is the first time that the Marxist-Leninist Command has appeared.

Each of the bombs caused property damage but was apparently placed so that no one would be hurt.

The PGT made news under its own name when it issued one of its infrequent statements denying a recent allegation by President Laugerud. Laugerud had accused the EGP of being supported by Cuba and said the PGT had asked Castro to curtail his assistance to the EGP for fear that the GOG would

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vent its wrath on the PGT. Apparently this accusation of cowardice embarrassed the PGT and they replied that SOG intelligence services should know that no official PGT delegation had visited Cuba since mid-1976.

Water Rights Dispute Continues Violence continued in the village of Aldea Rio, Chiquimula, where 11 campesinos were killed in April (see Guatemala A-62). This time, a military commissioner and four other men murdered an 11-year-old girl and her mother, relatives of one of the men accused of participating in last month's murders. The military commissioner was arrested, but this dispute may continue for some time yet.

Lastly, there were reportedly several unsuccessful attempts this month to kidnap IDB representative Alberto Castillo (an Argentine citizen). Castillo is said to have asked the IDB for an immediate transfer out of Guatemala. The attempts against Castillo are not included in this month's statistics because they were not reported in the press. However, the earlier kidnapping of Castillo's maid, apparently in an attempt to garner information on Castillo's habits, is included.

Statistics About the only bright aspect of the May picture is that the total number of incidents remained below 30 for the seventh consecutive month. Of the 27 press-reported incidents of probable political violence in May, there were 17 killings, 8 incidents of bombings (an unusually high number), and 2 kidnappings. Nine of the incidents, all murders, occurred on the south coast, 8 in Guatemala City, and the rest were scattered among Quezaltenango (3), Huehuetenango (1), Solola (1), Chiquimula (3), and Jutiapa (2). El Quiche was quiet.

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